

The REV. W. HUNT then read a paper on the "Muniments of Axbridge," which is printed in Part II.

MR. E. A. FREEMAN made some remarks on the origin and constitution of our Municipal Institutions, and especially on the powers and privileges of Superior Burgesses.

MR. KNYFTON said, that shortly after his appointment to the office of recorder, some thirty years ago, he had examined the muniments belonging to the corporation, and was assisted on that occasion by two barristers, both men of great antiquarian research; and also by the late Mr. Peter Fry, a solicitor, resident there, an extremely intelligent man, and who took a very lively interest in the past history of his native town, and who himself produced some very old documents. The conclusion arrived at was that the borough was a market town long anterior to the conquest, and that subsequently, through several reigns, it returned two members to Parliament. It also appeared quite clear that a considerable trade was carried on there. In some of the documents produced, reference was made to individuals who were described as merchants. Formerly the river Axe was navigable for coal vessels, and other small craft, as far as Axbridge, and so continued till the beginning of this century, when its navigation was stopped at Bleadon, under the provisions of the "Axe Drainage Act," which was passed in 1802. Down to the time of Elizabeth the town was one of considerable importance, and there was every reason to believe that it was as large then as it is now.

MR. T. SEREL then read a paper on the "Manors of Axbridge and Cheddar." Mr. Serel stated that Cheddar originally consisted of one great manor, but at the time of the Norman survey there were three smaller manors. The manors of Axbridge and Cheddar were granted by King

John to Hughe de Welles, by charter. The manors did not long continue in the holding of Hugh de Welles, as it seems certain that he had granted the property to his kinsman, Thomas de Welles, before 1209, (in which year he became Bishop of Lincoln) on a reserve rent. Soon after Thomas de Welles granted the town of Axbridge to Maurice de Gaunt, who subsequently transferred it to Bishop Joceline to whom also his brother Hugh of Lincoln made a release of the half mark reserved on the grant to Maurice de Gaunt. Both manors continued in the possession of the Church of Wells for a very long period, probably before the reformation. The manor of Cheddar was undoubtedly held by the church until 1548, when Bishop Barlow surrendered it with other estates to Edward VI, who in 1552 gave them to Sir Edward Seymour, and he, in 1556, sold the manor of Cheddar, usually known as Cheddar Episcopi, to Sir John Thynne, ancestor of the Marquis of Bath, the present owner.

Mr. Serel then gave particulars of the smaller Cheddar manors, known as the Cheddar Berkley, Cheddar Hannam, and Cheddar Fitzwaters, as well as of the Rectory Manor, leased by the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral. The extent of this latter property is about 250 acres, the rectorial rent charge is about £400 per annum, and the reversion is now vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Cheddar Hannam was owned by the great family of Cheddar. In late years the manor, stripped of a considerable part of the lands formerly held with it, came into the possession of Mr. Walter Long, whose descendant is still the owner. A portion of the estate seems to have constituted the small manor of Cheddar Berkley, and this was obtained by Mr. Alexander Popham, who sold the property to different persons.

The manor of Cheddar Fitzwalter or Fitzwaters was granted by King Stephen to Walter Malerbe. In the 15th century it was held by an old Cheddar family named Roo or Roe. In the early part of the 17th century it was in the family of Lancaster. The estate became heavily encumbered and all the charges were centred on Mr. James Birch, of the Middle Temple, in the year 1740, and by a deed dated 27th August 1748, the owners conveyed the entire freehold in the estate to him.

Notes on an Old Cross.

Mr. CHARLES POOLEY, F.S.A., of Weston-super-Mare, author of "The Old Crosses of Gloucestershire," communicated some notes on the head of an old cross, found in July of the present year.

The stone, which was found in pulling down an old cottage at East Harptree, and formed the front part of the basement of the chimney stack, is evidently the head of an old churchyard or village cross, probably the former, and is remarkable, in Mr. Pooley's opinion, as being the work of the early part of the 13th century. On one side the Crucifixion is represented, the figures being carved in bold relief. That of the Saviour is remarkably well depicted, and is very characteristic of the date of its execution. The head is thrown a little to the right side, and is crowned with a twisted wreath. The hair is parted and flows in long wavy locks to the neck. The eyes are closed in death. The upper part of the body is nude to the navel. Below this the figure is draped by a cloth round the loins, which falls in a graceful fold to the knees. The legs are crossed in a painful position, in order that one nail only may be made to fasten both feet. On the right side of the cross stands Mary, the mother of Jesus,

dressed in a long robe, which reaches in twisted folds to the ground. St. John stands on the left side, his arms apparently crossed, and habited in alb and cope. In the other compartment the figures of the Virgin and child and a young person kneeling in the act of adoration, are distinctly visible.

The stone is grey lias, and the angles and chiselling are as sharp as when first executed. A peculiarity worthy of notice is that the dresses of the figures have been coloured; remains of the colouring (red) are still to be seen on the loin cloth of the Saviour and on part of St. John.

Axbridge Church.

The members then visited this church, the architectural features of which were described by Mr. FREEMAN. It is a cross church with a central tower. The nave has no clerestory. The transepts are very small, the projections being swallowed up by the aisles and chapels which exist at the east ends. The chancel is a very inferior composition to the rest of the church, which is a common feature throughout the churches in Somerset. The niches have the statues left in them. The parapets are characteristic of the north part of the county. South of the Mendips, heavy battlements sometimes panelled, take the place of the pierced parapets. The church in the interior appears a well-arranged and harmonious whole, mainly because the tower is part of the design itself, and is not a tower preserved from an older building. Although the nave has no clerestory and has not the majesty of Wrington, the pillars and arches are very well worked. The coved roof is a very creditable work of the 17th century. If the church were restored it is hoped the roof will be preserved.

The altar cloth attracted much attention. It is a piece of needlework by Mrs. Abigail Prowse, to whose family there are several monuments in the church. Its date is 1720.

A large party then visited the CHURCHES of CHEDDAR, and RODNEY STOKE, when the Rev. PREBENDARY FAGAN gave an interesting account of the family of Rodney, whose monuments are in the church.

The members returned to Axbridge to dinner. After the usual toasts, the health of the Mayor, the Alderman and the Corporation of Axbridge was proposed by the President, and formal thanks presented to them for the courtesy extended by them to the members of the Society, to which Mr. G. MILLARD, Mayor, and Mr. TREW, the Alderman of Axbridge, responded.

Evening Meeting.

The Rev. PREBENDARY SCARTH read a paper by Mr. Atkinson, on the British Stations at Clifton, Bower Walls, and Stokeleigh, to which Mr. Scarth added observations on the Structure of Ancient Ramparts.

Mr. MOORE read a paper on the Geology of the Mendips.

The Rev. J. EARLE made some interesting remarks on the Muniments of Axbridge.

A paper on the "Rodentia of the Somerset Caves" by Mr. W. A. SANFORD, closed the proceedings.

Abstracts of the forgoing papers will be given in Part II.
